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11 Thomas (W.)
THE
Bishop of Worcester

HIS
LETTER
TO THE
CLERGY
OF HIS
DIOCESS.

LONDON,

Printed for Sampson Evans, Bookseller
in Worcester. 1689.

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HIS
LETTER, &c.

Salutem in Domino.

My Reverend Brethren,

HAVING to my great dissatisfaction received advertisements that in most Parishes of the Diocese, there is a notorious Omission of publick Catechising, (though strictly enjoined by Authority Civil and Ecclesiastical) whereby a Sluce hath been opened to streams, to torrents of novelties of Tenets; to impieties, enormities of Practices; I apprehend it strictly incumbent on me, as my
Pastoral

Pastoral duty, to excite, to importune the speedy redress of this scandalous neglect; to be like *Origen*, *Ephodioxenus*, that the younger sort whose precious Souls you are accountable for (within your several Precincts) may not be like Clouds whiffled about with every gust of Error; and whilst undisciplin'd, prostituted to the approaches, the lures of all defilements, exposed to the taint, the contagion of every modish Vice; but that they may by your sedulous conscientious Care be timely season'd with a tincture of Grace, the more firmly to retain the impression of it, that they may be Orthodoxly principled in point of Piety towards God, Loyalty to the Sovereign Powers, of Temperance to themselves, of Justice and Charity towards others.

I presume you will alledg, that the Pulpit hath herein abundantly supplied the defaultance of the Desk, of the Reading Pew; that your Sermons have reiterated those Lectures, though not in the formal Catechistical dress, and method. Whereas when humane laws are not repugnant to Divine; the solemn Maxime, Obedience is better than Sacrifice is a safe Rule, not onely in pious, but prudential considerations; it being an influence of
Judgment

Judgment, do not suspend our own Judgment, nor to overween our Intellectuals, but to allow that our Governours in their well weighed Constitutions, and Canons, may be as wise, as upright, as our selves.

I shall not set sacred Ordinances to dash with each other, which ought to be Buttresses for mutual support; I shall not discountenance, nor depreciate the indispensably requisite Exercise of Preaching; it being no panick terror of a dismal menace, not appropriated to the Apostle himself onely, but extended to the whole Priestly function; For necessity is laid upon me, yea woe unto me if I preach not the Gospel (1 Cor. 9. 16.) This Woe is a gloomy doom of utter darkness, *ipsa brevitae secunda* (in Tertullian's phrase) fraught with fulness in conciseness: yet this duty of Preaching is no *superfedeas* to the Catechism, one can give no legal Bill of Divorce to the other, but ought to be as a meet help in a conjugal link, the umbrage, the disparagement of the one as unfinished, ungarnish'd, will add no force, no lustre to the other; Preaching without the auxiliary Catechetical preparation may prove like to sounding Brass, like a tinkling Cymbal.

This

This condescension of instruction by way of Dialogue is more smoothly insinuating, more effectually edifying; whereby the principles of Religion are more easily imbibed, less nauseated, disrelish'd by Palates naturally corrupted, whereby the first rudiments of Divinity are more readily chewed by Novices, by Babes in Christ, whose Flock consists of Lambs to be fed, as well as Sheep. *Gerson* the famous *Sorbon* Doctor Chancellour of *Paris*, being aspersed, as if being a Catechist to Children, he had eclipsed his Splendour, sullied his Reputation in a derogatory degenerating disguise of humility; with a judicious candour he vindicated himself, not retaliating any virulency, or acrimony of Censure; that he might otherwise teach Disciples, *pompousius*, more pompously, instruct more floridly, more eloquently in the continued harangue of a Sermon, but not, *fructuosius*, more fruitfully, as to the information of the Understanding, as to the sanctification of the Heart, in greener years, though less plausibly acceptable to the itch of curiosity in the attention of the Ear, wherein by an exemplary integrity he design'd to advance Gods Glory, whilst he despis'd his own. Amongst my Brethren you, that are most eminently qualified

lified for Arts, and Languages (Talents you are intrusted with, that must be awfully reckon'd for at the Audit of the last day) ought not to disdain to stoop to the Catechistical task (solidly, perspicuously laying the foundation of Christianity) which requires a mature knowledge, an indefatigable diligence, and a discreet regular Zeal. Lewis the 9th of France did not apprehend it an indignity: derogatory from his Royal grandeur to catechise a Scullion, upon the account of the dignity of his Soul equally interested in the Excellency of Christs ransom with his own.

This Province however contemptible in the common estimate in later corrupted times, (it being with Seasons as with Vessels, the dregs draw downwards), yet it hath not been spurn'd at, nor swayed by the most renowned Fathers of the Primitive Church, *Eastern and Western*.

Not to insist on instances of a more transcendent Station, of an Evangelist of St. Mark at *Alexandria*, of an Apostle of St. Paul at *Corinth*, where his Planting hath been antiently expounded Catechizing.

Whereas no pain of Penitence, no sacrifice of Satisfaction

This shall be the prime ingredient for pro-
 fessing, and propagating the stability of Truth
 in Doctrine, of the beauty of holiness in conver-
 sation in the best and purest Ages of the Church.

It is the signal observation of the most Ac-
 complish'd modern Prelate Bishop Andrews, When
 Catechizing was left off in the Church, it soon became
 darkned and overspread with Ignorance: The Pa-
 pists therefore acknowledge that all the advantages the
 Protestants have gotten of their hath come by this
 exercise, and it is to be feared that if ever they get
 ground of us, it will be by their more exact and fre-
 quent Catechizing than we use.

I am innocently though (I presume) not in-
 offensively with that the overuse of this
 Ordinance be not rather damish'd, than justified
 by the subtleties of an Apology, by the specious
 excuse of some of my Brethren, in shifing the
 Scentre of guilt, entirely transferring it from their
 own criminality, to the strictness of discipline in
 behalf of their Children, who are held by any
 intimations, and overtures.

Whereas no paint of Pretence, no artifice of pal-
 liation

liation) can deceive the Scurvy, can evade the Jus-
tice of the All-seeing, revenging God.

I must mournfully acknowledge, that many Pa-
rents are alienated from this Discipline, being de-
praved by the fascination of erroneous Sentiments,
or deluded by prejudice of Education, or divert-
ed by profane supine inadvertences; so that there
may seem requisite the Constitution and practice
of the *Helvetian* Reformed Churches, established
also in a *Gallican* Synod, that none be admitted to
a Matrimonial State till first qualified by the Ca-
techistical Discipline; yet before any such expe-
dient can be expected, I question not but by the
blessing of God on the Devout Addresses, the active
endeavours of my Brethren of the Clergy, by the
vicissitudes of publick and private lenitive persua-
sive Arguments. (experimentally found successful)
some Parents even of obdurate tempers may be
softned to melting bowels, for the Spiritual con-
cerns, no less than the temporal of their nearest
Relations, the transcripts of the Originals them-
selves, multiplied, set out in lesser Editions, lest
otherwise they be branded in *Saint Bernard's*
expression to be *peremptores, not parentes*. Nor con-
sidering that the minority of Age, the blossoms

of years are not exempted from the blais of Fate, from the period of Death, according to the Jewish Proverb, There are Skulls of all Sizes discernable in Golgotha. It was their prudential cautionary Piety, that the first Characters to be imprinted in the minds of their Children should be religious Advertisements, whereby Nature in self might be insensibly cultivated, transplanted to Grace, and pious Acts without difficulty and anxiety improved to Habits.

It is the sage encouragement of a Sacred Precept, *Prov. 22. 6. Train up a Child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.* The intellectual faculties are best receptive, most retentive of the first Tincture of literature.

Quo semel est imbuta recens servabit odorem Testa diu.—

'Tis also with Tenets as with Viands, an Error in the first degree of Concoction is not easily corrected in the second or third. The Babes of the Israelites were Tenturaries, vers'd in the Principles of Divinity before they were instructed in the rudiments of Grammar. The Church of Christ in the

the Primitive lustre did not degenerate from this
Mosaical Pattern, Saint Jerome asserts, that the
first word Children were prompted to assay to ut-
ter, was *Halleluja* composed of *Halelu* and *jab*.
Praise the Lord.

As when in a lower in a lesser Orb, being for
many years confined to a Parochial distinct limit,
I could not with tranquillity of mind, with peace of
Conscience indulge my self to decline the Catechi-
stical performance; so being placed (however un-
worthily) in a higher Sphere for a more diffusive
inspection, (your selves the Shepherds, in a figu-
rative Notion; being my Flock.) I cannot with-
out perfidiousness to my Pastoral Charge, connive
at any, who shall reject this Initiatory Exercise, not
recommended only as arbitrarily to be pursued, or
baulked, according to your own fancies, but requi-
red unavoidably to be observed, as necessary, *ne-
cessitate praecepti*, though not *medii*.

In discharging this Duty you are not left at li-
berty for option in choice of Novelties of Cate-
chisms to gratifie your own selfish opinionative
Sentiments, or the different Shibboleth of others, as
if our Saviours Compass for Religion had as many
Points,

Points to vary as the Mariners for Navigation. The *Arrian* Creed was tax'd by *S. Hilary* to be as changeable as the Moon. In due submission to Authority the *Catechism* enjoy'd in the Church of *England* ought to be expounded, not exploded. It is highly approv'd by forein reform'd Divines. Mr. *Dally* a bright Luminary in his Sphere (in the *Gallican* Protestant Church) magnifies the Purity, the brevity, the perspicuity of it, Orthodoxly reduc'd from the Oracles of Scripture.

Dallieu in l. 2.
Confer.

I shall further implore your sedulous Care in admonishing the Parents of Children Catechiz'd, not to neglect the opportunities of Episcopal Confirmation, as soon as they are in a competent Age, a degree of apprehension of understanding: not barely capacitated by a promptness of memory, of elocution, for recital, to be disciplin'd onely like Parrots.

Let not the disuse excite a disesteem of Confirmation, though not to be dignified to be a Sacrament in the strictest notion, yet it is to be admitted, celebrated as a Sacred Ordinance, extending it's beneficial influence to both the signal, the formal, Evangelical Sacraments: like *Janus* it hath a double

double aspect, it looks backward, as additional, auxiliary to Baptism (inverting the Scene of the Votaries of Christian Piety by Proxies, by Sureties, to an immediate personal professional Obligation) Confirmation also looks forward, as a proper preliminary to the Eucharist precisely antecedently requisite for the practice, at least the desire of it in the judgment of the Church of *England*. It is generally retain'd, solemnly observ'd in the *Lutheran Churches* in the venerable track of the purest Primitive.

Not to insist on the Canons, the Sanctions of Councils: *Beza* in a higher Key of Advancement exalts it to be an Apostolical Institution in the phrase of Imposition of Hands (*Heb. 6. 2.*) *Calvin* vindicates the ancient exercise of Confirmation, not tainted with the Lees of the Modern Romish Superstition; (as it is retain'd in the Church of *England*) deploras the omission; yerns, pleads for the restitution of it, amplifies the emoluments of it for preventing new-started Errors, for tuning the jarring Strings of contentions to a melodious Harmony, for an uniform Stability of religious Principles and judicious Methods.

Let your Conversation be a daily Sermon
Major

Ca/v. 1. 4.
Inst. cap. 19.

Major esset in populo Christiano fidei consensus, non tanta multorum inscitia, non adeo temere quidam novis & peregrinis dogmatibus abriperentur, omnibus denique esset quedam velut methodus doctrinae Christianae.

Mr. Baxter expressly acknowledges that the not practising of Confirmation hath brought us into confusion, and that it must be the practising of it that must restore our Church to order, and heal most of our divisions.

Dr. Jackson pathetically resented the desalliance of a strict inquiry in this concern, both in Episcopal and Archidiaconal Visitations. Not so dilate an Epistle to a Volume, I shall conclude with a paternal Monitory Advice, which being render'd with the right hand, (with a sincere respect) let it not be receiv'd with the left, (with a sinister construction.)

Toward the younger Sort, Let not your grave Discourse be destitute of the Efficacy, tho' it be of the Formality of a Catechism; *Maxima debetur pueris Reverentia.* Towards the Elder Sort, Let your Conversation be a daily Sermon; in

in a Pastoral precedence of Conduct, after the mode of the Eastern Countries; to lead your Parochial Flocks by a Constancy of Orthodox Doctrine, (*Fidei regula* being *irrefragabilis*, *Immobilis*, saith *Tertullian*) and by the integrity of a regular Deportment; Not to be like the Roman *Cassius Severus*, *Malefica vita, sed orandi validus*, (in the Historian's Character of him) eloquently persuasive in Language, profanely execrable in Life.

This were to present the Devil in *Samuel's* Mantle, to cover the blackest, vilest deformity, that of Wickedness, with a specious white Ephod. The Infirmities of others are our Crimes, our Crimes Enormities, Prodigies. In the Mosaical Law as large a Sacrifice is requir'd for the Priest, as for the whole Congregation.

It besteads, beseems you in all the emergencies, difficulties of the times, to acquit your selves wise as Serpents (not to be deluded) harmless as Doves (not to be deprav'd, not envenom'd, embitter'd) The candor, moderation of *Bucer*, was too rigidly, if not morosely charged to be his Crime, even

even by some worthy reformed Divines his Contemporaries.

The most sedate tempers, the most pacifique Spirits are least impure whilst most offensive; It being the Observation of *Livy*, *Media via nec parit amicos, nec tollit inimicos*. Being unleaven'd with Animosities in Controversies, in Debates let your Prudence calmly guard your Innocence, and your Innocence uprightly sanctifie your Prudence. (If the salt be unsavoury wherewith shall it be season'd?) Let it be an unsullied, unbiaſt, unſcant'd Innocence. The Law of God is not disjunctive, but copulative in the decision of the Schoolmen.

The deſertion, the deteſtation of one Vice is no warrant, no privilege for the purſuits, the embraces, the careſſes of another, tho' more popular, ſet out in a more fashionable Dreſs, and Varniſh.

St. *Auſtin* complain'd of ſome Divines, whoſe keen reproof had but one Edge, extended not to both the extreams of iniquities; their Zeal being like *Ephraim's Cake*, Dough unbaked of one ſide.

Let

Let not your Spiritual Interests in any transactions truckle to Temporal. Let all recesses from the deliberate conviction of Judgment, the clear dictate of Conscience (tho' imoothly palliated) be piously dreaded.

It is the disconsolate Maxim of St. Bernard,

Qui agit contra Conscientiam edificat ad Gehennam.

Wherefore follow not Examples against the reluctancies of Conscience, but listen to the Excellent Admonition of the son of Sirach, *Accept no Person against thine own Soul, and let not the Reverence to any man cause thee to fall. Ecclesiasticus 4. 22.*

I cordially, constantly recommend you to the Divine Guidance, Solace, and Protection, earnestly requesting your devout Offices in the behalf of

Worcester,
June 1.
1689.

Your very affectionate Brother,
and faithful Servant in Christ

W. WORCESTER.

F I N I S.